VIII. NIETZSCHE'S ATTEMPT TO REGAIN THE WORLD

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Nietzsche's teachings concerning the "death of God" [„Tod Gottes"], the "nihilism" [„Nihilismus"] that follows from it and demands that the hitherto Christian-shaped human being be overcome into the "Overman" [„Übermensch"], and finally the "world" [„Welt"] as a living "will to power" [„Wille zur Macht"] that wills itself and as an "eternal recurrence of the same" [„ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen"], are not doctrines in the conventional sense. They constitute a single attempt to become re-betrothed to the world [„Wiederanverlobung" der Welt], from which the successful struggle of Christianity against the pagan veneration of the cosmos has separated us. Nietzsche does not expressly consider the inner connection between the death of God, the Overman, and the world willing itself; he gives it voice only fragmentarily and in parables. The positive basis of this unsystematic form of Nietzsche's thought lies in his daring to call truth itself into question along with the "will to truth." All earlier thinkers, even the skeptics, "had the truth"; by contrast, the "new thing about our present position toward philosophy" is the conviction—unknown to any previous age—"that we do not have the truth" (XI, p. 159). "Nothing is true, everything is permitted," says the Shadow to Zarathustra (VI, p. 397).

Footnotes — source printed page 156

1. Nietzsche's writings are cited according to the large- and small-octavo editions. On this chapter, see the author's *Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same), 1956.

Since nothing is any longer true once "truth as Being, as God, as the supreme authority" has become questionable, everything is consequently permitted (cf. XII, p. 406; XIII, p. 361; XVI, pp. 413 ff.). And since, after the end of the Christian interpretation of existence [christliche Daseinsauslegung], the human being is all that "no longer knows which way to turn"—neither able to escape the sphere of Christian transcendence nor to return into the rounded Greek world—Nietzsche could undertake his "last experiment with truth" [„letzten Versuch mit der Wahrheit"] only as an experiment, and call his own life an "experiment of the knower" [„Experiment des Erkennenden"]. He once characterizes the whole modern age as an age of experiments. These include not only future biological experiments in breeding, but the possibility that "whole parts of the earth" might "devote themselves to conscious experimentation." Historically, he had in mind the great discoverers and experimenters of the Renaissance, daring and venturesome spirits such as Leonardo da Vinci and Columbus, with whom he often compared himself.

Nietzsche likewise calls the new philosophers "experimenters" [„Versuchende"]: people who test themselves in the direction of the uncertain, "to see how far one can get with it. Like the sailor on an unknown sea." "A new species of philosophers is coming up: I venture to baptize them with a name not without danger. As I guess them … these philosophers of the future might have a right—perhaps also a wrong—to be called tempters [Versucher]. This name itself is, in the end, only an experiment, and, if one wishes, a temptation." As an experimenter, Nietzsche's Zarathustra is always on the way, a "wanderer" who tries and travels different paths in order to reach the truth. "By many paths and in many ways I came to my truth … And only reluctantly do I always ask about paths … I preferred to ask and try the paths themselves. An experimenting and questioning was all my walking." Nietzsche's experimental philosophy provisionally anticipates the possibility of thoroughgoing nihilism, in order to pass through it to its opposite: the eternal cycle of Being.

"Such an experimental philosophy as I live it anticipates, by way of experiment, even the possibilities of thoroughgoing nihilism: without this meaning that it would remain with a negation, with a No, with a will to No. Rather, it wants to pass through to the opposite—to a Dionysian saying-Yes to the world as it is, without deduction, exception, or selection. It wants the eternal cycle: the same things, the same logic and illogic of entanglement. The highest state a philosopher can attain: to stand Dionysianly toward existence—my formula for this is *amor fati* [love of fate]."

Nietzsche held fast to this experimental character of his philosophy from his first "years of experiment" [„Versuchsjahre"] through to the doctrine of eternal recurrence; that doctrine, too, remains a "last experiment with truth," and Dionysos philosophos [Dionysus the philosopher] is himself a "tempting god" [„Versucher-Gott"]. The god in whose name Nietzsche speaks in his final writings seems to announce the epiphany of a Greek god; in reality, he characterizes the world regained as a divinely perfect "Dionysian world," as it was before Christianity: not created for the sake of human beings by a god outside the world, but existing eternally from itself, continually coming into being and passing away again.

Already a century earlier—in 1863, at the age of nineteen—Nietzsche had posed, in an autobiographical sketch, the decisive question about that which encompasses everything: is it God or the world? "My Life" begins with the memorable sentence: "As a plant I am near the churchyard; as a human being I was born in a parsonage."

It ends with the observation that the time has come to stop letting events lead one, to take the reins oneself, and to step out into life. "And so the human being grows out of everything that once enfolded him; he need not break the fetters, for unexpectedly … they fall away; and where is the ring that still encompasses him at last? Is it the world? Is it God?" Nietzsche decided against the biblical God and for the "great ring" of the world, which encompasses the human being as well; in doing so, he also decided against Christian-Platonic metaphysics, or the "backworld" [„Hinterwelt"].

Even as a schoolboy Nietzsche had the problem of his life and thought in mind, long before he completed *The Antichrist* with the date: "Given on the day of salvation, on the first day of Year One (30 September 1888, according to the false reckoning of time)." He had come to the conviction that the Christian calendar begins with a "calamity," a *dies nefastus* [ill-omened day], and that after his last day one must begin anew in order to think rightly again and regain the truth about the world and the human being. The two essays he wrote as an eighteen-year-old schoolboy, "Fate and History" [„Fatum und Geschichte"] and "Freedom of the Will and Fate" [„Willensfreiheit und Fatum"], open the path Nietzsche followed toward his goal. Both contain the word *fatum* [fate]: in one it is related to history, in the other to the freedom of willing, since history exists only where human beings act and will something. In contrast to arbitrary freedom, *fatum* points to a naturally necessary state of being-so-and-not-otherwise, which constrains the will. As a necessity that constrains the will, fate concerns the history of human willing; in itself, however, it lies beyond human grasp. Fate belongs to the realm of nature, which is as it is and cannot be otherwise.

The problem contained in the connecting "and" of the two titles thus concerns the questionable relation between the history of human willing and the natural necessity of fate within the whole of the physical world, within which human beings, will, and history exist. From his first self-presentation through *The Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo*, what chiefly mattered to Nietzsche in history—he who "as a human being" was born in a parsonage—was the history of Christianity and the kind of willing and resistance to willing that underlies Christian morality.

The first of the two lectures begins with an awareness of how daring it is to attempt to find a "freer standpoint" from which to judge the Christian interpretation of existence and its moral consequences. "Such an attempt is not the work of a few weeks, but of a lifetime. For how could one destroy, through the results of youthful brooding, the authority of two millennia, the guarantee of the most intellectually gifted men of all times? How could one dismiss, with fantasies and immature ideas, all those pains and blessings of a religious development that have intervened so deeply in world history?"

The first decisive step toward the liberation of the spirit, which Nietzsche took fifteen years later with *Human, All Too Human* [*Menschliches-Allzumenschliches*], and the subsequent revaluation of all values, initially still takes the form of unresolved doubt. "I have tried to deny everything," but even tearing down is difficult, and building up is more difficult still. For "the power of habit, the need for something higher, the break with everything existing, the dissolution of all forms of society, the doubt whether two thousand years may already have led humanity astray through a phantom, the feeling of one's own presumption and audacity—all this is waging an unresolved struggle." The question arises: what is the morality of the prevailing morality?

At the same time, however, a question that reaches beyond this one already emerges: what does the entire system of human morality and its history mean within the "infinite world"? What significance does the human being, who wills and sets himself purposes, have within the whole of the natural world and its world-periods? Only if the hidden, innermost driving force in the "clock of Being"—twenty years later in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche speaks of the "clock of life" and the "hourglass of existence"—were "immanent humanity," or, conversely, if free will were only "the highest potency of fate," could the freedom to decide in historical willing be reconciled with the unavoidable fatality of the course of the natural world.

"Here is indicated that infinitely important problem: the question of the individual's legitimacy in relation to the people, of the people in relation to humanity, of humanity in relation to the world; here, too, is the fundamental relation between fate and history, between freedom and necessity, between willing and having to." For the human being as such, the "highest conception" of "universal history"—that is, a history that includes events in the natural universe—seems "not to be possible," though an overhuman conception of the world might be possible. To attain it, one would have to overcome oneself and step beyond oneself, as Zarathustra does, and be more than merely human.

As long as the relation of fate to historical humanity remains uncertain, the question remains whether everything merely reflects our way of experiencing the world, or whether we ourselves are only a mirror of the world's life. Nietzsche ultimately answered this in the final fragment of *The Will to Power* through the image of a double mirroring, one reflected in the other: he held his own mirror up to the world's Dionysian mirror. In the same way, the will that initially wills against fate becomes the freely willed necessity of *amor fati* [love of fate]—"a fate standing upon a fate"; its "ego" becomes "fate" in a worldly sense.

In its essence and origin, the human being is not a creature from beyond the world, but a Heraclitean child of the world, participating in the creative play of the world, destroying as well as creating.

"World-wheel, rolling onward, / Brushes goal against goal: / Necessity—the resentful one calls it; / The fool calls it—play … / World-play, imperious, / Mixes being and appearance: / The eternally foolish / Mixes us in!"

To regain the world lost through Christianity, a transformation of the spirit is required. The first speech of Zarathustra concerns this transformation; it is the key to Nietzsche's system of thought. Camel, lion, and child are the three symbols for the spirit of "Thou shalt" [„Du sollst"], "I will" [„Ich will"], and "I am" [„Ich bin"]. The first transformation of the spirit into the obedient spirit of "Thou shalt" names no *terminus a quo* [starting point]; it begins with the spirit of Christianity and the "ascetic ideals" discussed in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. The obedient spirit, which wills not its own will but the will of God, venerates what is foreign and patiently endures the hardest things. Among the hardest is to humble oneself, to wound one's pride and make one's folly shine, and to mock one's wisdom. Thus burdened, the camel hastens into the desert, where the spirit becomes a lion, devouring all reverence for God and for a foreign master in order to seize freedom for itself in its own desert.

Footnotes — source printed page 162

2. Compare Schelling's attempt, starting from transcendental idealism, to arrive at the equation of "I" and "nature." *Werke*, II, p. 725 ff.

3. VI, p. 125; XII, p. 412; XVI, p. 328. In *Zarathustra* there is no designation corresponding to "Thou shalt" and "I will."

The lion transforms the foreign "Thou shalt" of reverent faith into its own "I will," and becomes master of itself by commanding itself to do what it wills. Yet even the lion cannot create new values. It can only win freedom for new creation, by saying No to God and to the duty that told it, "Thou shalt." The final and most difficult transformation, from "I will" to the "I am" of the child of the world, is a "new beginning," a "first movement" without beginning or end, a "wheel rolling out of itself," and, in relation to willing that sets itself purposes, a "play" to which the child who has awakened says its "sacred Yes." By contrast, the mere will in its desert had a "sacred No." Willing liberates, but it liberates from everything into nothing, "for man would rather will nothingness than not will," as the final sentence of *On the Genealogy of Morality* has it.

The child, properly speaking, wills nothing; it has neither will nor resistance to will. It lives in freedom for the "play of creation." "That the creator himself be the child that is newly born, to this end he must also be willing to be the one who gives birth and the pain of the birth-giver" (VI, p. 125). Reborn in this way, "the one who had lost the world" has regained his world. The "child" of the final transformation has a polemical relation to the Christian message about the Kingdom of God, into which only those enter who are trusting and believing like children; it also has a positive relation to Heraclitus's child of the world, who plays innocently at the seashore, creating and destroying. It is a "forgetting," because it lives wholly in the present at every moment, neither remembering and regretting what is irretrievably past nor expecting and hoping for what is to come. It is simply, undividedly, wholly present again, in the cosmic innocence of Being that is continually becoming.

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4. Compare VI, pp. 91 and 102.

Since every "Thou shalt" of the moral imperatives is measured against the Christian God, who commanded human beings what they ought to do, the death of God is also the principle of the will that wills itself within the human being. In the "desert of its freedom," the human being would rather will nothingness than not will at all; for the human being is "human" without God only insofar as it wills itself. The death of God means the resurrection of the human being entrusted to itself and commanding itself, whose utmost freedom lies in "freedom toward death." At the peak of this freedom, however, the will to nothingness turns into willing the eternal recurrence of the same.

The dead Christian God, the human being standing before nothingness, and the will to eternal recurrence—which willingly wills fate—characterize Nietzsche's system as a whole as a movement: first from "Thou shalt" to the birth of "I will," and then to the rebirth of "I am" as the "first movement" of an eternally recurring existence amid the natural world of all that is. A "double will," which frees itself from the nothingness to which its won freedom had led it, turns the extreme nihilism of an existence resolved upon nothingness into the necessary willing of the eternal recurrence of the same.

Three figures characterize this path from a spirit that has become negatively free to the teacher of eternal recurrence. The Wanderer accompanied by his Shadow symbolizes progress to the boundary of nothingness. The Wanderer accompanies the overhuman Zarathustra, himself still wandering, as Zarathustra's shadow; finally, the god Dionysus takes Zarathustra's place, and Nietzsche knows himself at the end as Dionysus's last disciple. In the Dionysian stance toward existence, which says Yes once and for all to the whole of Being and time, a final and "highest" stance toward existence is attained—beyond good and evil, but not beyond good and bad. This Dionysian interpretation of the world …

… corresponds, in Dionysos philosophos [Dionysus the philosopher] himself, to the "highest kind of Being." In *amor fâti* [love of fate], the self-affirmation of Being that eternally recurs is united with an eternal Yes of one's own existence to the whole of Being.

"Shield of Necessity! / Highest constellation of Being! / —which no wish can reach, / which no No can stain, / eternal Yes of Being, / eternally I am your Yes: for I love you, O Eternity!"

The "Eternity" of which Nietzsche speaks, and in whose memory the "Yes and Amen Song" at the end of the third part of *Zarathustra* closes—only to be repeated at the end of the fourth—is not the timeless eternity (*aeternitas* [timeless eternity]) of the biblical God before the creation of the world. It is instead eternal time (*sempiternitas* [everlasting duration]), the unceasing time of the world, the eternal cycle of coming into being and passing away, in which the permanence of "Being" and the change of "becoming" are one and the same. What is "always" is not timeless, and what always remains the same is not temporal in the sense of continuous change. Under the shield of supreme necessity, the "chance" of human existence, which has become eccentric, is once again at home in the whole of living Being that is the world. At the height of modernity, Nietzsche's attempt to become re-betrothed to the world repeats the ancient certainty of the world.

This corresponds to a characteristic difference between Zarathustra's first speech and the opening sentences of Descartes' *Principia*: Descartes doubted the certainty of the world accessible to the senses so radically that he needed a proof of God to establish its existence. "Since we came into the world as children and made many judgments about sensible objects before we had attained the full use of our reason …"

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5. Compare the beginning of the First Meditation and Part Two of the *Discourse on the Method*.

sensory objects, we passed all sorts of judgments before we had attained the complete use of our reason; thus we are hindered from knowing the true by many prejudices. We seem unable to free ourselves from them in any other way than by resolving, once in our lives, to doubt everything in which we encounter even the slightest suspicion of uncertainty."

Nietzsche doubts this path to certainty and grounds his own new certainty precisely in the fact that, on his path to truth, Zarathustra finally "awakens" as a child of the world, which is "forgetting" and a "new beginning"—but not once and for all, with doubt, rather again and again through the play of creation. Awakened as a child, Zarathustra is liberated not only from the authority of "Thou shalt"—from which Descartes had already been liberated—but also from the "I will" that would doubt everything that has hitherto bound me.

Nietzsche gains this new certainty in relation to the world, which allows Zarathustra to "plunge with pleasure into chance" (VI, p. 304), by doubting Descartes' modern doubt once more, from the ground up, at the summit of modernity, where nothing is any longer true. Descartes does doubt whether he is in the truth, since God might be an evil spirit who deceives; but Descartes assures himself that deception is incompatible with God's perfection. By contrast, Nietzsche's "new Enlightenment," for which God is no longer merely doubtful but dead, takes as its "starting point" the "irony toward Descartes" and his "frivolity" in doubting. For Descartes' "I do not want to be deceived" might still be the instrument of a deeper and subtler will to self-deception: namely, the refusal of Descartes' will to truth to acknowledge even the appearance in which the truth of Being appears. His rational reason constructs a world behind the visibly appearing world, in order to be secure in the world thus contrived.

Source page 167

Descartes' point of departure in the immediate self-certainty of his "I am" is a Christianly conditioned renunciation of an original certainty of the world.

Is certainty possible at all in knowledge, or is it grounded only in Being? And what is knowing knowledge in relation to Being? "For someone who already brings ready-made articles of faith to all these questions, Cartesian caution no longer has any meaning: it comes far too late. Before the question of 'Being,' the question of the value of logic would have to be decided."

For Descartes, "Being" is predetermined as being knowable, because he believes in scientific knowledge; yet he does not see the unveiled, true face of the highest kind of living Being.

Descartes' distinction between a true (mathematically conceived) world and an apparent (sensuously perceptible) world is not confined to the physics and metaphysics of the modern age. Its original source lies in the desacralization of the visible cosmos in favor of an invisible God, whose kingdom is not of this world, while this world itself is a dependent creation and, as such, might not exist—or might be otherwise—if God had willed otherwise.

But if the world is no longer credible as God's creation, and the human being no longer as God's image, then the meaning of, and relation between, world and human being change. An early draft, "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense" (X, p. 189; cf. XVI, p. 3 ff.), determines this relation in terms of the unconditional priority of the world. The "condition de l'homme," as Pascal puts it, is one of "disproportion": a lack of proportion and a misrelation between human being and world. For Nietzsche, however, this no longer points toward a transcendent resolution in God, but leads into an irresolvable aporia, because no connection runs from the extra-moral, that is, cosmic, sense of truth to a human-moral one.

Source page 168

"In some remote corner of the universe, poured out and glittering through innumerable solar systems, there once was a star on which clever animals invented knowing. It was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of 'world history': yet only a minute. After a few breaths of nature, the star grew rigid, and the clever animals had to die. — Someone could invent such a fable and still not have adequately illustrated how miserable, shadow-like and fleeting, purposeless and arbitrary the human intellect appears within nature. There were eternities in which it did not exist; when it is over for it again, nothing will have happened. For this intellect has no further mission that extends beyond human life."

The natural world is "in itself"; the human being is in it only "for itself," and the truth of the whole seems fundamentally barred from the insight of the human being thrown into the world. One cannot understand: "Where in all the world, given this constellation, does the drive to truth come from!" Human beings live enclosed in their "room of consciousness" and at the same time thrown into the world of nature; but "nature threw away the key" that might open access to it. Woe to the fateful curiosity that might once look out through a crack from the room of consciousness and down into the world, then suspect that the human being hangs in "dreams," as though on the "back of a tiger." As a substitute for this truth barred to it, humanity arranges the world to suit itself and fixes conventional, life-preserving truths that are in fact illusions, though people do not know them to be so.

Source page 169

Nietzsche describes the aporia that arises from this split for the problem of truth as follows: forbidden truth is concealed by a permitted lie, and forbidden lying takes the place of permitted truth. Either the individual who wants to acknowledge the forbidden truth must sacrifice itself—or it must sacrifice the world.

Error can truly be annihilated—that is, the impulse to conceal truth inherent in the human will to truth—only along with the life of the knower, because the "final" unveiling of Being cannot endure "incorporation." Thus the Empedocles fragment of 1870/71 already says that Empedocles, driven through all stages of knowledge, finally turns the last stage against himself, goes mad, and, before disappearing into the crater, proclaims the truth of rebirth.

In agreement with the aporia of truth and lies in the "extra-moral," cosmic sense, a later plan for ⋆The Will to Power⋆ describes nihilism—whose self-overcoming is eternal recurrence—by means of the following alternative:

> "The opposition between the world we revere and the world we live, which we are, is dawning. What remains is either to abolish our reverences or ourselves. The latter is nihilism …."

Nietzsche formulated the end of this dawning opposition between the world we are and the world we esteem in ⋆Twilight of the Idols⋆ as the "End of the Longest Error," because, with Zarathustra's teaching, the opposition between the "true" and the "apparent" world comes to an end.

> "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable. History of an Error."

Source page 170

"1. The true world, attainable by the wise, the pious, the virtuous—he lives in it, he is it. (The oldest form of the idea … paraphrase of the sentence 'I, Plato, am the truth.')

2. The true world, unattainable for now, but promised to the wise, the pious, the virtuous ('to the sinner who repents'). (The idea's progress: it becomes subtler, more insidious, less graspable … it becomes Christian ….)

3. The true world, unattainable, unprovable, unpromisable, but already, as thought, a consolation, an obligation, an imperative. (The old sun at bottom, but seen through fog and skepticism; the idea become sublime, pale, northern, Königsbergian.)

4. The true world—unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And as unattained, also unknown. Consequently, neither consoling, redeeming, nor binding: how could something unknown bind us? … (Gray morning. First yawn of reason. Cockcrow of positivism.)

5. The 'true' world—an idea no longer useful for anything, not even binding—an idea that has become … superfluous, consequently a refuted idea: let us abolish it! (Bright day; … return of common sense and cheerfulness; Plato's blush of shame; devilish din of all free spirits.)

6. We have abolished the true world: what world remained? The apparent one, perhaps? … But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one! (Midday; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)"

Nietzsche thinks Christianity together with Platonism and allows the history of the decline of the "true" world to begin with Plato, because Christian belief incorporated Greek philosophy—above all Neoplatonism—into its theological formation.

Plato became a "fellow-participant" in Christian revelation[6]—a recurrent topos of Christian apologetics.[7] From the retrospective perspective of Christian interpretation, Plato's theory of Ideas, analogous to the Kingdom of God, is a doctrine of the supersensible, true world above and behind the apparent, sensible one.

In this history of the metaphysical world-beyond, only the final paragraph requires explanation, for it says more than its literal wording. If, with Zarathustra, the history of the longest error—that is, the "lie of two millennia," as Nietzsche calls Christianity—comes to an end, then Nietzsche's "prelude to a philosophy of the future" must think once again from the beginning, before the Christian-Platonic tradition: that is, within the realm of "Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks," a subject of one of his earliest writings.

The abolition of the true world, and thus at the same time of the apparent world, means—given the previously developed aporia between a world we revere and another that we are—that we no longer need to abolish ourselves, because we cannot find and realize that ideal world within this real one. The continuation only hinted at in the final section would have to be stated explicitly as follows: I, Nietzsche-Zarathustra, am the truth of the world, for I have been the first, across the entire history of the longest error, to rediscover the world before Plato. I want nothing other than this eternally recurring world, no longer alienated from me, which is at once my ego and my fate; for I myself will eternally will myself again, as a ring within the great ring of the world willing itself.

6. See Goethe's review of that title.

7. See, for example, J. Pieper, ⋆Über den Begriff der Tradition⋆ [On the Concept of Tradition], 1958.

Source page 172

If the "high point of humanity," its "midday," which is a moment of eternity ("Midday and Eternity" was once planned as a title for ⋆Zarathustra⋆), coincides with the abolition of the true and apparent worlds, it follows that the human being who has overcome himself—that is, the Overman—is essentially identical with the essence of the world.

A fragment of ⋆The Will to Power⋆, for which ⋆Zarathustra⋆ is the "vestibule," concerns this all-encompassing world, which lies not only on this side of true and apparent but also beyond good and evil. ⋆Zarathustra⋆ is the unavoidable entrance to the unfinished ⋆Will to Power⋆, because the godless Overman is already not an extreme subjectivity, but "the highest kind of Being" as such, so that in his soul "all things have their flowing and ebbing, their flood and ebb" (VI, p. 304).

The will to power is an attempt at a new "interpretation of the world," and as such an "interpretation of all events"; as an interpretation of all events, it is at the same time an interpretation of human nature, under the title "will to power," which names the vitality of all life. The living world and the embodied human being both reveal the one nature of all living processes.

This all-encompassing natural world, the "ring of rings," was made neither by God nor by humanity. It simply is: an unthinkable, primordial fact. "The world exists; it is nothing that becomes, nothing that passes away. Or rather: it becomes, it passes away, but it has never begun to become and never ceased to pass away—it sustains itself in both … It lives from itself: its excrements are its nourishment."[8] As a world that endures perpetually—that is, one that comes into being and passes away—its existence has no purpose or goal beyond or outside itself, and therefore no "meaning" in the sense of a "what for."

Its most ancient nobility is that it is "by chance," but a chance so comprehensive that the chance called "human being" is aufgehoben [sublated] within it.

Nietzsche's "new conception of the world" survives in two different concluding versions: one emphasizes the Being of the world as will to power, the other as eternal recurrence.

Second version appearing in the text

> "And do you know, too, what 'the world' is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a fixed, brazen magnitude of energy that does not grow larger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, unchanging in size; a household without expenses or losses, yet equally without increase or income; enclosed by 'nothing' as by its boundary; nothing blurred, wasted, or infinitely extended, but as a determinate force placed within a determinate space—and not in a space that is somewhere 'empty,' but rather as force everywhere, as a play of forces and waves of force, at once one and many; here accumulating and there diminishing at the same time; a sea of forces storming and surging within itself, eternally changing, eternally flowing back, with immense years of recurrence, with an ebb and flow of its forms, driving from the simplest into the most diverse, from the stillest, most rigid, coldest into the most incandescent, wildest, most self-contradictory—and then again returning from abundance to simplicity, from the play of contradictions back to the pleasure of harmony; affirming itself even in this sameness of its paths and years, blessing itself as that which must eternally recur, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no weariness, no fatigue—this, my Dionysian world of eternal self-creation, of eternal self-destruction, this mystery-world of double delights, this my 'beyond good and evil,' without a goal, unless the joy of the circle itself is a goal; without will, unless a ring has good will toward itself—do you want a name for this world? A solution to all its riddles? A light for you, too, you most hidden, strongest, most fearless, most midnight-loving?—This world is the will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are this will to power—and nothing besides!" (XVI, p. 401 ff.)

Source page 174

Variant of the first version appearing in the appendix

> "Unless a ring of good will is to turn, on its own ancient path, always around itself and only around itself: this is my world—who is bright enough to look upon it without wishing for blindness? Strong enough to hold his soul up to this mirror? His own mirror to the mirror of Dionysus? His own solution to the riddle of Dionysus? And whoever could do this, would he not have to do still more? Pledge himself to the 'ring of rings'? With the vow of his own recurrence? With the ring of eternal self-blessing, self-affirmation? With the will to will again and yet again? To will the return of all things that have ever been? To will outward toward all that must ever be? Do you now know what the world is to me? And what I will when I will this world?— —" (XVI, p. 515)

Whereas in the first version the problem of willing eternal recurrence seems to find a solution through the reciprocal mirroring of the world's constitution and one's own conduct—because the world's willing of itself is conceived, from the standpoint of eternal recurrence, as willing itself again and again, and the human will, willing backward as well as forward, likewise moves in a circle—the questionable character of willing fatality in the second version is more concealed than articulated by the abrupt formula "will to power," which is supposed to be simply one and the same in human being and world.

In the end, the slogan-like formulation of life as a "will to power" does not reveal the recurring cycle as the overall character of life. Rather, it reveals the unique historical situation in which Nietzsche considered the nature of all things from the standpoint of a human being preparing, as Overman, to take dominion over the earth and replace God.

Source page 175

Yet, however much Nietzsche intends to give the "will to power" a worldly [mundane] meaning and not to restrict it to the human will, one cannot overlook that the conception of the "overall character of life" as "will to power" springs from a historically specific experience. The doctrine of recurrence, too, has, alongside its cosmological aspect, an anthropological and moral aspect that prevents it from being treated as a unified and seamless whole.

8. *Der Wille zur Macht* [The Will to Power], § 1066.

The inadequacy of the will that sets itself goals—which would rather will nothingness than not will at all—for characterizing the aimlessly circling movement of the world is already apparent from the fact that Nietzsche himself, in both versions, partly withdraws the designation of the world's movement by the word "will" with a "if not …," since one can only speak improperly of a circular movement as having a "goal," or of a ring as having "good will" toward itself. The word "will" cannot be used meaningfully if one abstracts from the goal-directedness and purposiveness of human willing toward a future end.

The decisive model for the whole metaphysics of willing, however, is Christian theology and its eschatology, which presupposes a creative will that created the world for the sake of the human being and toward an ultimate end. What is decisive for all biblical thought is not the relation of the human being to a world that has always already been, but the relation of will between God and the human being. The human being exists to do God's will, and its sin is self-will. Will, like *appetitio*n (*appetitio*) for the happy life and natural love of life, is a fundamental determination of human existence. Faith, too, is a willing-to-believe. *Nemo credit nisi volens* [no one believes unless willing], and *voluntas est quippe in omnibus motibus* [the will is indeed present in all movements]. In Augustine's determination of the human being, *appetitio*, *velle*, *amare* [desiring, willing, loving] belong together in a trinity. In the desire for happiness, in willing and loving, lies what is properly human, the "heart" of the human being. *Tota vita Christiana sanctum desiderium est* [the whole Christian life is holy desire]. The earthly life of the human being is not a circular movement returning to its beginning; its principle is hope for a "not-yet," akin to faith, a *pervenire ad id quod nondum est* [arriving at that which is not yet].

9. See the author's Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen [Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same], 1956, p. 86 ff.

The theology of desiring and loving will persists, in transformed form, into the metaphysics of will of Schelling, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. Nietzsche experiments in a world that has got rid of God, but holds fast to the determination of human being and world by will, although he denies mundane will any orientation toward purpose and goal, in order to maintain the world's self-sufficient cycle. Nietzsche, too, can no longer pose the question of the world in the Greek manner—that is, without reflecting back upon himself, purely from the sight of the world. Which of the many Greek writings "On the World" would ever have asked, in an anti-Christian way, "Do you know, too, what 'the world' is to me," in order to win the world back as "his own," and then supplement this egocentric question with the further one: "And what do I will when I will this world?" Nietzsche thinks so thoroughly from the standpoint of a willing that has got rid of God that he then denies the world, which wills itself again and again, goal and purpose, value and meaning.

This is a victory of the scientific spirit over the religious spirit that invents gods: the scientific spirit comes to see that the world, as the One and Whole of a determinate quantity of force or energy, has no goal, no purpose, and hence no "meaning" (*The Will to Power*, §1062). But if the world, as perpetual becoming, has no meaningful goal, then it is "equal in value" at every moment—or, put differently, it has no value at all, for it lacks anything by which it could be measured and evaluated. "The total value of the world is inestimable" (*The Will to Power*, §706). One must therefore not attribute to it a "total consciousness" either. For the total phenomenon of life, consciousness is merely one more means in life's unfolding and expansion of power. It would be naïve to try to justify the whole of the living world by reference to one particular feature such as consciousness, spirit, reason, morality, or ethical conduct. Yet if one eliminates the assumption of an overall consciousness that posits ends and means, one thereby also eliminates the idea of a God superior to the world (*The Will to Power*, §707), who created it for the sake of the human being—and, all the more, the secularized idea of a "moral world-order" (VIII, p. 389).

10. De trinitate XIV 7, 10; De Civitate Dei XIV 6 and 7.

With the elimination of conscious divine willing, divine intentions, and a moral world-order, the world again appears as it originally is: beyond good and evil, as an "innocence of becoming," which includes the human being, for whom no one is to blame—not God, nor the human being itself. That something like the human being exists at all, and is as it is, belongs to the fatality of everything that exists. But if the human being belongs to the whole of the world and exists only within this whole, and if there can be nothing outside the whole by which it might be measured or assessed, then a "great liberation" has been achieved: liberation from guilt as well as from purpose. Purpose and guilt evaporate "before sunrise," like rain. As a chance product of the natural world, the human being bears no guilt toward a God who is the *causa prima* [first cause] of everything (*The Gay Science*, §1). "With this liberation from God, we first redeem the world"—namely, for itself, in the opposite sense to Augustine's claim that Christ liberated the world from itself. "Atheism and a kind of second innocence belong together" (VIII, p. 388; *On the Genealogy of Morality* II, §20). With Nietzsche, nineteenth-century a-theism reaches its completion in the renewed recognition of the world as world. It thereby ceases to be theism.

Source page 179

Zarathustra's Godlessness and the Completion of Atheism

Nietzsche's youthful doubts about the truth of the Christian tradition reach a decisive conclusion in Zarathustra's parabolic speeches, which aspire to be a "fifth," anti-Christian Gospel. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was planned as the "vestibule" to the unfinished structure of *The Will to Power*, which—like all the writings after Zarathustra—is an attempt at a "revaluation" of all previous, that is, Christian, values, by developing a new "interpretation of the world." The "death of God" first demands that the human being as hitherto Christian be overcome into the "Overman" [Übermensch], and makes possible the recovery of the world. The preface to Zarathustra recounts how he encounters an old saint singing songs in praise of God, unaware that his Lord no longer lives. In the final part of Zarathustra he encounters another saint, the last pope, who already knows that God is dead and is therefore "out of a job." During their conversation, the pious pope calls the godless Zarathustra the "most pious of all the godless." Zarathustra, who calls himself simply "the godless," rises at the same time as God's downfall and demise. And because this Christian God had been the meaning and purpose of human being and world for almost two millennia, the immediate consequence of his death is "nihilism," which means that world and human being are without meaning and purpose. There is no longer any answer to the question: "Why the human being at all?" To go on living after the death of God requires a transformation and overcoming of the hitherto Christian human being into the Overman.

The second principal proposition emphasized by Nietzsche in the preface, following the first concerning the death of God, reads: "I teach you the Overman"—that is, in the sense of an "overcoming" of the human being that has now become necessary. Nietzsche's teaching of the Overman revalues the teaching of the God-man Christ, the former Overman. Zarathustra's fifth Gospel seeks to redeem us from the former "Redeemer." In place of the *imitatio Christi* [imitation of Christ] comes the attempt to bring the human being into conformity with the overall character of the world's life. The human being must overcome itself lest it end in the nullity of nihilism arising from God's death, or sink down into the contemptible "last man." It must defeat "God and nothingness." "This human being of the future, who will redeem us just as much from the former ideal as from what had to grow out of it—from the great disgust, from the will to nothingness, from nihilism—this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision, which makes the will free again, which gives the earth its goal and

the human being its hope again, this Antichrist and anti-nihilist, this conqueror of God and of nothingness—he must one day come …" (VII, p. 396).

"The Overman is the meaning of the earth." As such, he can renounce all metaphysical otherworlds and otherworldly hopes for a kingdom of God. "Remain faithful to the earth" is the third principal proposition of the preface. It draws from the death of God and the overcoming of the human being into the Overman the consequence of a purely worldly existence without transcendence. This earthly, embodied, and literally secularized human being, now preparing to assume dominion over the earth—the lords of the earth are to replace God (XII, p. 418)—must, since no God any longer commands him what he ought to do, be able to give himself his own will and command himself.

The eagle and the serpent coiled around its neck, pride and prudence, are Zarathustra's animals. The high-minded courage of pride is directed against the humility of submission to God's will, whose Christian emblem is the sacrificial lamb. Zarathustra, the godless one, seeks his equals. "And all those are my equals who give themselves their own will and cast off all submission" (VI, p. 250). Yet there is also a kind of submission in the attitude that says, "It will happen of itself." Against this laissez-faire attitude and all half-hearted willing, Zarathustra says: "Do whatever you will—but first be such as can will." Yet although the principle of "I will" replaces the obedient spirit of "Thou shalt," belief in God's will is itself determined by a will of its own. What "remained" after the decline of Christian faith is indeed one's own "I will," but this apparent remnant is already its core. Will is the "principle" of faith itself, because the believing human being does not will itself. European nihilism, whose problem is "whether it wills," arose with the disappearance of Christian faith; but Christian faith had itself already arisen in late antiquity through an illness of the will. Whoever cannot endure ruling and willing on their own seeks support and backing in the alien belief that another will is already there to tell them what they ought to do.

"Faith is always most desired and most urgently needed where there is a lack of will: for the will, as the affect of command, is the decisive mark of sovereignty and strength. That is to say, the less someone knows how to command, the more urgently they desire someone who commands, commands strictly—a god, prince, … physician, confessor, dogma, party conscience. From this one might perhaps infer that the two world religions, Buddhism and Christianity, may have had their origin, and especially their sudden spread, in a tremendous illness of the will. And so it truly was: both religions encountered a desire for a 'thou shalt' that had been piled up to absurdity by an illness of the will, a desire driven to desperation; both religions were teachers of fanaticism in times of enfeebled will and thereby offered countless people support, a new possibility of willing, enjoyment in willing. For fanaticism is the only 'strength of will' to which even the weak and insecure can be brought … When a person arrives at the fundamental conviction that they must be commanded, they become 'believing'; conversely, one can conceive a pleasure and strength of self-determination, a freedom of the will, in which a spirit bids farewell to every faith and every desire for certainty, being practiced in keeping its balance on light ropes and possibilities and in dancing even over abysses. Such a spirit would be the free spirit par excellence" (*The Gay Science*, §347; *On the Genealogy of Morality* II, §22).

The crucified God of Christianity, whose death and resurrection Hegel once again grasped philosophically at the end of the Christian tradition, has, for Nietzsche—who recognized Hegel as the last one to delay sincere atheism—been "historically refuted." "Christianity is now coming to an end." Christianity has become ripe for dissection by critical history. "All the possibilities of Christian life, the most serious and the most casual, the most harmless and thoughtless and the most reflective, have been tried out; it is time to invent something new, or else we must keep falling back into the old cycle. To be sure, it is difficult to escape the whirlpool after it has spun us around for a few millennia. Even mockery, cynicism, and hostility toward Christianity have played themselves out; one sees an ice sheet in warmer weather: everywhere the ice is cracked, dirty, without shine, with puddles of water, dangerous" (X, p. 289). What still haunts us from God is only his shadow, and the churches have become God's tombs.

The great event that God is dead means that the entire horizon has been wiped away toward which European human beings for two thousand years have interpreted their Dasein [existence], as though everything had been ordained for the salvation of the soul. But because this Christian faith had until now been the center and center of gravity of human existence, it must initially seem as if, with God's death, all gravity has vanished from things. And because, for Nietzsche, "the new center of gravity" for Dasein, now become fleeting and purposeless, is the thought of eternal recurrence [Wiederkehr des Gleichen], a clear connection emerges between the death of God, the nihilism that follows from it, and nihilism's self-overcoming into the unconditional affirmation of an eternally recurring existence, which itself is only a "ring" within the great ring of the world.

Yet the death of God, precisely as the origin of nihilism, is also an occasion for philosophical cheerfulness. Despite the gloom that initially follows in its wake, one can feel relieved when no "Thou shalt" weighs any longer upon the human will, after God's death has released the human being from consciousness of guilt and obligation to existence, and restored to it the "freedom to die." This is the subject of the first aphorism of Book Five of *The Gay Science* ("We Fearless Ones"), under the heading "What Our Cheerfulness Means." "The greatest recent event—that 'God is dead,' that belief in the Christian God has become unbelievable—is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe. For the few at least whose eyes, whose suspicion in their eyes, are strong and subtle enough for this spectacle, some sun seems to have set, some old, deep trust to have been turned into doubt: to them our old world must seem daily more evening-like, more mistrustful, stranger, 'older.'

For the most part, however, one may say: the event itself is far too great, too remote, too far beyond the grasp of many for even news of it to be said to have arrived; let alone that many would already know what has actually happened—and what, now that this faith has been undermined, must collapse because it was built upon it, leaned against it, or grown into it: for example, our entire European morality. This long succession of demolition, destruction, downfall, and upheaval now impending—who today could guess enough of it to serve as teacher and fore-announcer of this immense logic of terror, as prophet of a darkening and solar eclipse the like of which has probably never yet occurred on earth? … Even we … firstlings and premature births of the coming century, to whom the shadows that must soon envelop Europe ought already to have become visible: why is it that even we await this darkening without sympathy, above all without concern or fear for ourselves? Are we perhaps still too much under the immediate consequences of this event? And these immediate consequences for us are, contrary to what one might expect, by no means darkening; rather, they are like a new, difficult-to-describe kind of light, happiness, relief, cheerfulness, encouragement, dawn … In truth, we philosophers and 'free spirits' feel ourselves illuminated by a new dawn at the news that the 'old God is dead'; our hearts overflow with gratitude, astonishment, foreboding, expectation—at last the horizon seems free again, even if it is not bright; at last our ships may put out to sea again, face every danger; every venture of the knower is permitted once more; the sea, our sea, lies open before us again; perhaps there has never yet been such an 'open sea.'"

The open sea that tempts Nietzsche, like a new Columbus, toward voyages of discovery is the same sea about which the soothsayer is questioned (VI, p. 197). His prophecy concerns the coming nihilism, which says that everything is now futile, equal, and empty. "Indeed, we have harvested: but why have all our fruits become rotten and brown? All our labor was in vain; our wine has become poison; an evil eye scorched our fields and hearts yellow. We have all grown dry; and if fire falls upon us, we scatter like ashes. All our wells have dried up, and the sea too has withdrawn. All ground wants to split open, but the depth will not swallow! 'Ah, where is there still a sea in which one could drown?'—thus our lament sounds, across shallow swamps."

Later, after Zarathustra has overcome himself and his own nihilism, the dried-up well becomes the "well of eternity," at which all things have been baptized; and the sea in which Zarathustra wishes to drown becomes the sea of forces surging within themselves, the Dionysian world described by the final fragment of *The Will to Power*, in which Zarathustra's soul is reflected. Through nihilism, the death of God opens the way to rediscovering the world.

The parable of the madman (*The Gay Science* III, §125), who proclaims the death of God, has led those who were once believers and lost their faith, yet still wish to be religious, to find their own mood in this grotesquely impassioned parable: absence of God and gods, "world-night" and "madness," "abandonment by Being" and "oblivion of Being." Heidegger maintains that Nietzsche here cried out to God himself, *de profundis* [from the depths], for he was not an "ordinary atheist" but "the only believer of the nineteenth century." It is not said in whom or what he was supposed to have believed. Only this much is true: for Nietzsche, atheism was not yet self-evident, but a problem. In *Ecce Homo* he accepted a pupil of Franz von Baader's assessment of his writings: that he had sought to bring about "a kind of crisis and supreme decision in the problem of atheism." The question is: a decision in favor of what? A new God? Or the old Greek divinity of the world? Or a resolutely godless world?

The question cannot be answered unambiguously, for even the concluding words of *Ecce Homo*, "Dionysus against the Crucified," are far removed from the unambiguous slogan of Voltaire, "Écrasez l'infâme" [crush the infamous thing], which Nietzsche takes up at this point. Nietzsche's atheism is the godlessness of a person who, at the beginning and at the end of his career, invoked an "unknown God." This ambiguity cannot be removed by Nietzsche's explanation in *Ecce Homo* that he knows no "genuine religious difficulties" from experience and that he deliberately lived out the entire opposition of a religious nature (XII, p. 330). In the writings that follow Zarathustra and comment upon it, not only the Christian essence but every religious essence is unmasked in terms of moral psychology. Moreover, if one considers that Nietzsche saw the certainty of a "faith" and a "conviction" as no argument for truth but rather an argument against it, then his own growing conviction in himself and in his mission becomes thoroughly questionable. It is plausible that his "Antichrist" is not a religious scandal, but only the most extreme intensification …

The supplied scan ends mid-sentence on source page 186, after "sondern nur die äußerste Verschärfung" ("but only the most extreme intensification"). No continuation was supplied; the translation therefore stops here rather than inventing the missing text.

of a critique of Christian morality that had already begun in the earliest writings. That Nietzsche is so much more personally involved and radical in his final attack may be due to the fact that, in his isolation and in the feeling that no one was hearing him, he shouted himself hoarse and acted himself into a role in which he overreached himself and "became the actor of his own ideal." It is characteristic that Overbeck, the closest and most level-headed witness to Nietzsche's exaltations and masquerades, could for moments not shake off the dreadful suspicion that Nietzsche's madness might be simulated, until his experience in Turin shattered every conjecture. However uncertain it may always remain whether Nietzsche had a genuine religious experience, it is certain that he sought only one thing: "someone genuine, upright, simple, unambiguous, a person of complete honesty" (VI, p. 373); this is why he accepted the break with Richard Wagner.[1] Zarathustra himself, it is true, is described in the posthumous notes (XVI, p. 381) as merely an old atheist: "who believes in neither old nor new gods. Zarathustra says he would—; but Zarathustra will not … One must understand him correctly." To understand his godlessness properly, four things must be borne in mind: (1) that in Nietzsche himself "the religious, that is, the god-forming instinct sometimes comes alive at an inopportune time" (XVI, p. 380); (2) that the humanitarian God of Christianity cannot be demonstrated from the world known to us; (3) that Nietzsche decisively rejected the God of the Old Testament, who is concerned with human beings and judges morally, as well as the crucified and redeeming God-man of the New Testament, and spoke of him in Zarathustra's "Ass Festival" with unsurpassable blasphemy; and (4) that the only god in whose name Nietzsche spoke is the Greek god Dionysus, because for him Dionysus signifies a symbol of "the highest affirmation of the world and transfiguration of existence so far attainable on earth" (*The Will to Power*, §1051), whereas the Christian God is "the greatest objection to existence." "The God on the cross is a curse upon life, a signpost to seek redemption from it; the Dionysus cut into pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return home from destruction" (*The Will to Power*, §1052). The Dionysian mysteries celebrate, in the sexual will to procreate, the eternal recurrence of natural, worldly life. "What did the Hellene pledge himself to through these mysteries? Eternal life, the eternal recurrence of life; the future promised and consecrated in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond death and change; true life as the continued life of the whole through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality. For the Greeks, the sexual symbol itself was therefore the true profound meaning within the whole of ancient piety. Everything individual in the act of procreation, pregnancy, and birth awakened the highest and most solemn feelings. In the doctrine of the mysteries, pain is declared sacred: the 'birth pangs of the woman in

labor' sanctify pain in general—everything that becomes and grows, everything that guarantees the future, entails pain … For the eternal pleasure of creation to exist, for the will to life eternally to affirm itself, there must also eternally be the 'torment of the woman in labor' … All this is what the word Dionysus means: I know no higher symbolism than this Greek symbolism, that of the Dionysia. In it the deepest instinct of life, directed toward life's future and eternity, is religiously felt—the path to life itself, procreation, as the sacred path … Only Christianity, with its resentment against life at its foundation, made sexuality something impure: it cast filth upon the beginning, upon the precondition of our life …" (*Twilight of the Idols*, §4). The love of the Christian God for human beings is "the extravagance of the thought of human beings living without sexuality" (XI, p. 313).

The only god acknowledged by Nietzsche's philosophical thought is, to be sure, a god of Greek mythology in name; what he designates by this name, however, is the world of eternally recurring life, which is a worldly will to self-preservation and enhancement. "Let us remove the highest goodness from the concept of God: it is unworthy of a god. Let us likewise remove the highest wisdom: it is the vanity of philosophers that is responsible for this absurdity … God as the highest power—that is enough! From it everything follows, from it follows—'the world'!" (*The Will to Power*, §1037). God is the same as the world, which is a will to power that wills itself again and again. This corresponds to aphorism 150 in *Beyond Good and Evil*, according to which everything becomes world "around God." By contrast, the biblical Creator God, who is above and outside the world, contradicts the divine cycle of coming-to-be and passing-away (XII, p. 57). God, that is, the divine (*to theion*) of the world that is complete in itself, whole and perfect, is its highest power and force—namely, a finite, bounded, and therefore determinate force. "Our presuppositions: No God: No purpose: finite force" (*The Will to Power*, §595). Above all, the procreative power of all living being belongs to this divine force. The natural world is the highest power and, as such, divine. With this conception of the world, "atheism" is completed and brought to an end. Judged from the standpoint of Christian theism, the world has become godless, ungodly; in itself, as the One and Whole existing by nature, it is divinely perfect. But can the whole of the world, according to Christianity, still—or once again—be revered and experienced as a divine cosmos?

Under the title "Our Question Mark," *The Gay Science* (§346) says: "We have grown hard-boiled in the insight … that things in the world are in no way conducted divinely, indeed not even rationally by human standards" … The world in which we live is ungodly, immoral, inhuman. But what does "inhuman" mean in relation to the whole of the world? To speak in this way, the human being would have to be the measure of the world. "The whole attitude 'human being against world' …, the human being as the measure of value of things, as judge of the world, who finally places existence itself on its scales and finds it too light—the monstrous absurdity of this attitude has become conscious to us as such and is repugnant to us. We already laugh when we find 'human being and world' placed side by side, separated by the sublime presumption of the little word 'and'!" But—and this is the "question mark" Nietzsche places before this aphorism—do we not thereby, by finding 'human being and world' laughable, as though the human being were separated from the world and yet proportionate to it, take one more step toward contempt for the human being, in reaction against its ridiculous overestimation, as though it were, as God's image, the ground and goal of the whole creation? "Have we not thereby fallen under the suspicion of an opposition, an opposition between the world in which we have hitherto felt at home with our reverence (that is, an ideal, ideational, ought-to-be world) and another world, which we ourselves are: a relentless … suspicion of ourselves, which could … confront us with the terrible either-or: 'either abolish your reverences, or—yourselves!'" The latter would indeed be "nihilism." But the question is whether abolishing the things hitherto most revered is not nihilism too. Nietzsche answered this question, which had remained open here, in *Twilight of the Idols*, by turning the "true" world of ideals, ideas, and idols into a fable, and thereby at the same time exposing the merely illusory character of the apparent world.

Because Nietzsche is not merely against the Christian God of redemption, Christian morality, and the secularized ideals of "latent" Christianity, but is for the amoral world, with whose restoration atheism is brought to an end, he could not "for a long time yet" find himself described by the "older expression": godless, unbelievers, immoralists. "Atheist" has indeed become an anachronism; for what thinker still truly believes in the God of the Old and New Testaments, or even in a religion of practical reason? Who, on the other hand, still believes, as Nietzsche wishes, in the divinity of the world understood in the Greek manner? This is the question posed to us by Nietzsche's "atheism." The atheists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the "*libres penseurs*" against whom Bossuet fought, still had to assert themselves passionately against a dominant ecclesiastical faith and free themselves from it, making a confession of their unbelief. For the religious critics of the nineteenth century, detachment from ecclesiastical Christianity had already become easy, even if it entailed secular disadvantages socially and politically, as the fate of Bruno Bauer, David Friedrich Strauss, and Feuerbach shows. In general, however, atheism in the nineteenth century became the self-evident presupposition of scientific thought. In Nietzsche's words, it is "an all-European event" and the result of the popularization of the scientific mode of thinking.

12. Compare the author's Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen, 1956, pp. 100 ff.; F. Nietzsche, Werke XVI, p. 417; XV, pp. 146 ff.

Nietzsche therefore speaks of the victory of "scientific atheism." It is the life-element of all honest thinking. "Wherever the spirit is at work today in a strict, powerful, and counterfeit-free way, it now dispenses altogether with ideals—the popular expression for this abstinence is 'atheism'—apart from its will to truth. But this will, this remnant of an ideal, is … that ideal itself in its strictest, most spiritual formulation, wholly esoteric, stripped of all outward trappings; thus it is not so much its remnant as its core. Unconditionally honest atheism … accordingly does not stand in opposition to that ideal, as it appears to; rather, it is only one of its final developmental phases, one of its concluding forms and inner consequences—it is the awe-inspiring catastrophe of a two-thousand-year discipline in truth, which at the end forbids itself the lie involved in belief in God" (VII, p. 480). The Christian conscience has converted and sublimated itself into the scientific conscience, which now turns against its own origin by questioning the morality of prevailing morality. With this question and this attack on the latent Christianity of morality, Nietzsche brought back to life the self-satisfied atheism of nineteenth-century religious criticism. He no longer, like Feuerbach, denied only the "subject" of the Christian "predicates"—that is, God—but also, and above all, the predicates themselves: goodness, love, compassion, and so on. Against the Christian virtues of love of God, humble obedience, and selfless love of one's neighbor, he dared to revalue "lust," "lust for domination," and "selfishness" as virtues, "beyond good and evil," according to the distinction between good and bad (VI, p. 274), and with a view to the "overall character" of life, which he interpreted through the universal principle of appropriation, incorporation, and enhancement as will to power.[13] For: "What is the vanity of the vainest human being compared with the vanity possessed by the most modest, in that he feels himself to be 'human' within nature and the world?" This all-too-human vanity, whose historical origin lies in the belief that the human being, as the sole image of God in the whole of the natural world, occupies an absolutely special position, has prevented us from recognizing the "basic text" of human nature: the human being as a natural being. The task, therefore, is to translate the human being back into the nature of all things and to "master the many vain … interpretations and secondary meanings that have until now been scribbled and painted over that eternal basic text, *homo natura*; to ensure that henceforth the human being stands before the human being as it already stands, hardened by the discipline of science, before the rest of nature, deaf to the luring melodies of old metaphysical birdcatchers, who have piped to it for far too long: you are more! you are higher! you are of a different origin!—that may be a strange task, but it is a task—who would deny it?" (VII, p. 190).

13. See, for example, *The Will to Power*, §702: "What the human being wills, what every smallest part of a living organism wills, is an increase in power. In striving for it, pleasure and displeasure alike follow; from this will it seeks resistance, needs something that opposes it … Take the simplest case, that of primitive nutrition: the protoplasm extends its pseudopodia to search for something that resists it—not out of hunger, but out of will to power. It then attempts to overcome that thing, appropriate it, incorporate it: what is called nutrition is merely a consequential phenomenon, a practical application of that original will to become stronger."

Yet modern human beings no longer have their most immediate access to human nature through the direct sight and investigation of the world, but only through the experience of their own I as an embodied, bodily existence. For a philosophy of "for-itself" existence, nature appears only in the drives, cravings, and sensitivities of embodied existence, whereas the "other" nature outside us provokes nothing but disgust, as in Sartre's *La Nausée*.

> "Whether roses, whether snow, whether seas,
> whatever blossomed and faded,
> there are only two things: the void
> and the marked-out I" (G. Benn).[14]

But the experience of the body, too, has been obstructed since post-Christian philosophy located what is properly human in the *scio me vivere* (Augustine), the *cogito me cogitare* (Descartes), the "I" that accompanies all my representations (Kant), the "self-consciousness" of spirit that exists for itself (Hegel), the "for-itself" existence (Sartre), and the "*Dasein*" (existence) for which its own Being is at issue (Heidegger)—that is, in reflection back from the world upon ourselves—and opposed it to nature as the Other, as what exists outside us and is external, because nature, unlike the human being, is not self-conscious. It follows from Nietzsche's attempt to translate the human being back into nature—or, in Schelling's words, to "de-potentiate" it—that he distinguishes the self-conscious "I" from the bodily "self" and asks about the origin and essence of consciousness. In the self, as what is more primordial, "the great reason of the body" is active and dominant. "The despisers of the body" are people who interpret their physiological discomposure morally, as sin. Alluding to the child awakened in the third transformation in the first speech of Zarathustra, the speech "On the Despisers of the Body" says: "I am body and soul"—so speaks the child. And why should one not speak like children? But the awakened one, the knowing one, says: I am body entirely, and nothing besides; and soul is only a word for something about the body. The body is a great reason, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a shepherd. Your little reason, which you call 'spirit,' is also an instrument of your body … a little … plaything of your great reason. 'I,' you say, and are proud of this word. But the greater thing … is your body and its great reason: it does not say I, but does I. What the sense feels, what the spirit knows, never has its end in itself. But sense and spirit would persuade you that they are the end of all things: so vain are they. Sense and spirit are instruments and playthings: behind them still lies the self. The self also searches with the eyes of the senses; it

listens with the ears of the spirit. Always the self listens and seeks: it compares, subdues, conquers, destroys. It rules and is also the ruler of the I."

14. See Benn's letter to F. W. Oelze of 16 September 1935 concerning Nietzsche.

The many concrete observations and analyses of unconscious reality and efficacy that run throughout Nietzsche's entire body of writings attest not only to the psychologist and moralist; they are essential to his attempt to translate the human being back into nature and thereby into the life of the world. Nietzsche therefore also recognized the fundamental significance of Leibniz's doctrine of "*petites perceptions*," long before its implications became evident through Freud's discovery of the unconscious. "I recall Leibniz's incomparable insight, by which he was right not only against Descartes but against everything that had been philosophized up to his time: that consciousness is merely an accident of representation, not its necessary and essential attribute, and that what we call consciousness thus constitutes only one state of our mental and psychic world … and by no means the world itself" (*The Gay Science*, §357).[15] "The problem of consciousness (more correctly: of becoming conscious) first confronts us when we begin to understand the extent to which we could do without it: and physiology and the history of animals now place us at the beginning of this understanding (which has thus required two centuries to catch up with Leibniz's far-sighted suspicion). For we could think, feel, will, and remember; we could likewise 'act' in every sense of the word—and still none of this would need to 'enter our consciousness' … The whole of life would be possible without its, as it were, seeing itself in a mirror: just as, in fact, even now the by far predominant part of this life takes place without this mirroring—and this is true also of our thinking, feeling, and willing life" (*The Gay Science*, §354; *The Will to Power*, §707). Nietzsche's reference to Leibniz could be reinforced by Spinoza, whose doctrine of human nature and the free necessity of human action rests on the distinction between conscious intentions and unconscious drives. To translate the human being back into the natural world, however, Spinoza above all had to undermine the theological prejudice that the world was created by God for the sake of the human being, and in turn translate God's power into the power of nature.

15. Compare I. Kant, Vorlesung über die Metaphysik, pp. 135 ff.